

**James Madison to Edmund Randolph, May 14, 1782.
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TO EDMUND RANDOLPH.¹

1 From the Madison Papers (1840).

Philadelphia, May 14, 1782.

Dear Sir, —The Ceres man-of-war, we are informed by a New York paper, arrived there, in twenty-five days, on the fifth instant, having on board His Excellency, Sir Guy Carleton, Commander-in-Chief, &c., and *commissioned for making peace or war* in North America. The intelligence brought by this conveyance is, that the vibrations of power between the Ministry and their rivals had terminated in the complete dissolution of the former and organization of the latter. What change of measures will follow this change of men is yet concealed from us. The bill for empowering the King to conclude a peace or truce with the revolted Colonies in North America had been brought into Parliament on the twentyseventh of March. The language of it is at the same time cautious and comprehensive, and seems to make eventual provision for our independence, without betraying any purpose of acknowledging it. The terms peace and truce are scarcely applicable to any other conventions than national ones. And the King is authorized to annul or suspend all acts of Parliament whatever, as far as they speak of the Colonies. He can, therefore, clearly remove any parliamentary bar to his recognition of our Independence, and I know of no other bar to his treating with America on that

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ground. All this is, however, very different from a real peace. The King will assuredly prefer war as long as his Ministry will stand by him, and the sentiments of his present Ministry, particularly of Shelburne, are as peremptory against the dismemberment of the Empire as those of any of their predecessors. They will at least try a campaign of negotiation against the United States, and of war against their other enemies, before they submit to it. It is probable that the arrival of Sir Guy Carleton will not long precede an opening of the first campaign. Congress will, I am persuaded, give a proper verbal answer to any overtures with which he may insult them; but the best answer will come from the States, in such supplies of men and money as will expel him and all our other enemies from the United States.

We have at length brought our territorial business to an issue. It was postponed *sine die* on the sixth instant. We have transmitted the whole proceeding to the Governor, to be laid before the Assembly.

There are various accounts from the West Indies, which render it pretty certain that an engagement has taken place between the two fleets. The circumstances are not ascertained. The issue seems, at least, to have been so far in favor of our allies as to leave them free to pursue their course with their convoy to Hispaniola, where a junction is to be made

with the Spaniards. The object of this junction is universally supposed to be Jamaica.

Since I finished the above, a letter has come to Congress from General Washington, enclosing one to him from Sir Guy Carleton, announcing his commission, in conjunction with Admiral Digby, to treat of peace with this country, and requesting a passport for his secretary, Mr. Morgan, to bring a similar *letter of compliment* to Congress. The request will certainly be refused, and General Washington probably directed to receive and forward any despatches which may be properly addressed to Congress.

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A public audience was yesterday given to the Minister of France, in which he formally announced the birth of the Dauphin. It was deemed politic at this crisis to display every proper evidence of tionate attachment to our ally. The Minister was accordingly received with military honors, and the audience concluded with the discharge of cannon, and a *feu de joi* of small arms. A public entertainment followed, and fireworks at night closed the scene.

The answer reported by the committee on Mr. Dana's letter gave him a cautionary instruction. It afterwards went to the Secretary of Foreign Affairs, and thence, I suppose, in his dress, to Petersburg. Mr. Jones will give you

more satisfactory information on this, as also with respect to the answer to Mr. Jay's letter.

Your surmises relative to a revival of paper currency alarms me. It is impossible that any evil can render such an alternative eligible. It will revive the hopes of the enemy, increase the internal debility of the States, and awaken the clamors of all ranks throughout the United States against her. Much more to Virginia's honor would it be to rescind the taxes, although the consequence of that can but be of a most serious nature.